

## Book Review

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Charles E. Van Engen, Ed.

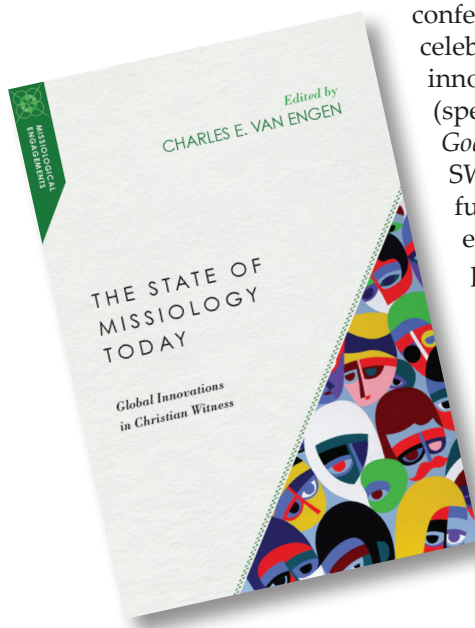
*The State of Missiology Today: Global Innovations in Christian Witness*

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016

pp. 304 US\$ 31,50 (IVP website)

In 2015, Fuller Theological Seminary organized a conference to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the School of Intercultural Studies (SIS), former School of World Mission (SWM). *The State of Missiology Today* is the result of the proceedings of that conference. The aim of the book is to celebrate the missiological vision and innovations of Donald A. McGavran (specially his work *The Bridges of God*) and associates in the influential SWM. At the same time, it proposes future directions of missiological engagement projecting from present converging themes weaved throughout the book. The identified “trends” are not intended to be comprehensive; still, it serves well as a springboard.

The list of authors reflects the ecumenical and global perspective that Fuller believes is the current missiological milieu. The



result is a multicultural, polycentric and polyphonic collection of articles that readers shall find helpful. The title is somehow misleading since the book has no intention to cover and evaluate the current state of the field in a global dimension *per se*. Readers must bear that in mind.

The book is divided in two parts. The first section celebrates the vision and innovations of McGavran and associates in the SWM showing diffusion innovations that sprang from their work. A general introduction to the work is written by Charles Van Engen and frames the conversation as looking back to evaluate and reflect on the theories, paradigms and models produced through the school. Noteworthy, in this first part, is the article by European scholar Pascal Bazzell and the question of encounters with other faiths and whether *evangelization* includes being *evangelized*. What would it mean for an Adventist mission? The second part looks at current arguments for the field casting the directions of what lays ahead for missiology.

The book overall result is a variety of missiological perspectives that is not comprehensive but helpful for a taste of contemporary wider missiological thinking in Christianity. Furthermore, it reflects diverse possibilities for missiological studies. Some might think that it is too loose and does not come to a conclusion of “the” state of missiology. However, it precisely reflects the nature of mission studies in transition as it moves away from a modern to a postmodern missiological paradigm, as David Bosch has argued. Yet, it is in the conclusion that I judge the work drives the most stimulating material for the student of mission.

If in the introduction Van Engen looks backwards, in the conclusion current Dean of the SIS and mission historian Scott W. Sunquist draws from the collection of articles to compile eight trends to guide the future of missiology. They are (1) technology, (2) insider movements, (3) preemptive peacemakers, (4) scripture, (5) migration and displacement, (6) Holy Spirit, (7) poverty and promise, and (8) mission from the South to the East. Are these the only trends and themes in missiology today? Certainly not, as the book does not claim comprehensiveness or completeness, but it serves well as a springboard. At least two elements are clear from the readings. Mission is moving away from numerical gains and the “how-to” towards kingdom living witness among peoples. This transition reflects the frustration with ready-made methods in favor of more spiritual one in which the central driving force is the often unsettling guidance of the Holy Spirit in context. The other connected converging theme is the refocus of mission as an action of God. This reflects further maturity of the understanding and implications of the *missio Dei*, which has been largely accepted across the board in global Christianity. Adventist missiologists would do well to ask questions concerning the implications of such trends

for Adventist missiology. Furthermore, what are possible contributions from an Adventist mission perspective to the wider Christian conversation?

This book collection of articles will benefit the student of mission in different stages of academic journey. It is well-organized and relevant with voices from different Christian traditions and from various parts of the world. It is not a textbook, but a panoramic view of contemporary concerns and approaches in mission studies.

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